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DECAL Specialist Honored with National Award

*National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC) recognizes Melissa Davis
During Conference in Atlanta*

ATLANTA, Ga., (July 30, 2012) – As a consumer services banker in the early 90s, Melissa Davis faced a personal child care crisis. With one small child and another on the way, she learned that her family child care provider was moving and her efforts to find another quality center were proving fruitless. So Davis left her bank job and opened Little Blessings Family Preschool and Consulting in Dacula, Georgia, a child care center she would operate for 11 years.

Now, eight years later, Davis is sharing her expertise with child care providers across the state as a Program Evaluation and Development Specialist with Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning. This week, she was honored by the National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC) during their conference in Atlanta with the Ruby Brunson Community Advocate Award, which recognizes accomplishments in strengthening family child care.

Davis is humbled by the recognition, saying, “I don't feel I've done anything special that any one of us at Bright from the Start isn't doing for our customers. I once heard a speaker say that we should find people we respect and admire and emulate their qualities. I've put that advice to use and have tried to adopt those habits I saw in others that I wanted for myself.”

“We are very proud of Melissa and her passion for the health, safety and quality education of Georgia’s youngest learners,” said DECAL Commissioner Bobby Cagle. “She is helping create a unique culture at DECAL of serving children, parents, teachers and providers and her passion comes through with every interaction. I join in the applause for this outstanding achievement.”

Davis operated her child care program from April, 1993, to May, 2004, joining the Child Licensing Section of the Georgia Department of Human Resources in May, 2004. Later that fall, Governor Sonny Perdue created a new agency, Bright from the Start, and she became a Child Care Consultant and was later promoted to Lead Consultant. Davis remained in that role until just recently when she was asked to join DECAL’s Quality Initiatives Division in her current role.

“Melissa builds rapport with child care providers,” notes DECAL Assistant Commissioner for Programs Carol Hartman. “Providers appreciate her guidance. They know that she has the experience and education to help them meet and maintain quality standards.”

“I love being a witness to and documenting the good things providers are doing in their programs to promote healthy child development,” Davis explained. “It’s important that providers are validated and encouraged for their work and I enjoy being a resource to help them achieve higher goals of helping families.”

About Bright from the Start

Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning is responsible for meeting the child care and early education needs of Georgia’s children and their families. It administers the nationally recognized Georgia’s Pre-K Program, licenses child care centers and home-based child care, administers Georgia’s Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS) program, federal nutrition programs, and manages voluntary quality enhancement programs.

The department also houses the Head Start State Collaboration Office, distributes federal funding to enhance the quality and availability of child care, and works collaboratively with Georgia child care resource and referral agencies and organizations throughout the state to enhance early care and education. For more information, go to www.dec.al.ga.gov.



Melissa Davis (left) is congratulated by DECAL Commissioner **Bobby Cagle**